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Supreme Court Agrees To Rule On Taxpayer Challenge To CIA

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court Monday agreed to decide if a taxpayer can challenge as unconstitutional the secrecy that cloaks the financing of Central Intelligence Agency operations.

The case involves the "standing" of taxpayers to challenge the actions of government when they think the Constitution has been abused.

The justices agreed to hear an appeal by the government of a ruling of the U.S. Circuit Court at Philadelphia that gave William B. Richardson of Greensburg, Pa., standing to sue against the secrecy of CIA appropriations and expenditures.

If the Circuit Court ruling stands, argued U.S. Solicitor Gen. Erwin N. Griswold, then it "is almost certain to spawn a significant increase in suits by taxpayers challenging a wide variety of government programs ..."

In a 1968 case, the high court tempered a prohibition against taxpayer suits by establishing a two-point test. If a taxpayer establishes a personal stake in the issue, and can link that to a specific violation of the Constitution, then he can sue.

The government claimed that Richardson's complaint was a general one, and that the constitutional mandate required only publication of appropriations.

Under the 1949 Central Intelligence Agency Act, Congress appropriates, publicly, to government agencies money which is then transferred secretly to CIA.

If Richardson doesn't have standing to enforce the provision, said the Circuit Court, "then it is difficult to see how this requirement which the framers of the Constitution considered vital to the proper functioning of our democratic republic, may be enforced at all."

Also, in a series of rulings Monday, the justices refused to reopen the abortion is[illegible] [illegible] from court [illegible] guardians of the [illegible] and [illegible] additional [illegible] data.

The justices directed lower courts to apply their Jan. 22 decision to anti-abortion laws in nine states.

In that decision, the court ruled that states may not prohibit doctors from performing abortions in licensed medical facilities until the seventh month of pregnancy.

The court also agreed to hear the case of an Atlanta, Ga., man who said he should be allowed to challenge the constitutionality of the state's anti-trespass law, even though he has not been prosecuted under it.

Richard G. Steffel appealed a decision of the U.S. Circuit Court in New Orleans which barred his attack on the state law.

Steffel claimed it was used to abridge his right to distribute antiwar handbills at a Dekalb County shopping center in 1970.

At the same time, his petition to the court read, Boy Scouts and garden clubs were allowed to distribute literature, hold bake sales and the like.

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